PCB

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Globe Democrat

Conferees agree to restrictions on toxic chemicals

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WASHINGTON—Legislation that would assure that potentially toxic chemicals harmful to health are adequately tested before reaching the marketplace was agreed on by a House-Senate conference Tuesday.

The bill would ban polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a chemical additive used in the manufacture of plastics, inks and various industrial products.

The chemical has been linked to various ailments in laboratory animals such as skin lesions, tumors, gastric disorders and reproductive disorders.

"THIS IS one of the most important pieces of health and environmental legislation to be acted on by this Congress," said Rep. John M. Murphy, D-N.Y., chairman of the consumer protection and finance committee.

The bill would authorize the Environmental Protection Agency to require manufacturers of all potentially dangerous chemicals to conduct testing to determine effects on health and the environment.

Manufacturers would have to notify EPA 90 days before the production of

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new chemical substances or the production of older chemicals for significant new uses.

The EPA administrator would be required to stop the manufacturing process, or limit it, if there is insufficient data on the chemical.

IF THERE is sufficient data, the EPA would be required to protect against unreasonable risks by making rules that are immediately effective, and could ban or curtail the manufacture of chemicals determined to be hazardous.

Murphy said it is unusual for Congress to pinpoint a specific product in general legislation, "but PCBs have been shown to be such a pernicious substance that we felt it necessary to act directly against it."

EPA announced last week its preliminary findings of analysis of 1,000 samples of mothers' milk tested for PCBs. Of 67 samples analyzed so far, the EPA found PCBs in 65 of them. The amount ranged from the level considered acceptable in baby food by the Food and Drug Administration up to more than 50 times that level.

THE FINAL compromise legislation will now go to the full House and Senate for expected passage next week.

Two previous sessions of the House and Senate passed bills before, but this is the first time that the different chambers have been able to resolve their differences.

The other toxic substances bills died in conference.

The Ford administration has opposed the bill. However, Murphy said he did not think the President would actually veto it.

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